



Comment on: COVID 19 and the race to publish: an ethical issue

A. L. Kiely ^{1,*} and G. S. Nolan ²

¹Department of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery, Queen Elizabeth Hospital, University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Trust, Edgbaston, Birmingham, UK

²Department of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery, Whiston Hospital, St Helens and Knowsley Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust, Prescot, UK

*Correspondence to: Department of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery, Queen Elizabeth Hospital, University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Trust, Edgbaston, Birmingham, UK (e-mail: aillbhe.kiely@nhs.net)

Editor

We read Safieddine and Kassir's letter¹ on the ethics of pandemic publication with interest. They commend the role journal editors play in the academic response to the virus by expediently reviewing and disseminating an overwhelming number of submissions. 'Corona', from the Latin 'crown', was applied to a family of viruses owing to their reminiscent appearance of a solar corona or halo. To date, we have made significant progress on a disease unknown to most just 8 months ago—a testament to academics worldwide.

The authors also state that the race to publish is not in science's best interest. This we must respectfully disagree with. In the face of this unknown disease, which has caused widespread death and disruption to the social, political and economic fabric of our society, attention and thus publication is warranted: catastrophes drive innovation. We see it fitting that scientists and medical professionals turn their undivided attention to this monumental problem. To quote Edison: 'To have a great idea, have lots.' Consider the 2015 conundrum of '#thedress', which half the world saw as black/blue and half as white/gold. This visual illusion dominated newsfeeds for 24 h until it was solved. Likewise, the COVID-19 'brain drain' will surely expedite a solution.

Furthermore, as the pandemic progresses, the knock-on effect of COVID-19 is realized fully (for example the upending cancer services)². This flurry of academic activity has given these authors a glimmer of hope through the darkness of lockdown; of course it would be preferable if we humans could apply ourselves in the same manner to other pressing problems (global warming, HIV, malaria, etc.), but let us not chastise our hard-working colleagues writing up their novel ideas. Instead, let us be a supportive scientific community, offering methodological support and enthusiasm, as we still have a long way to go before reclaiming our crown from coronavirus.

References

1. Safieddine M, Kassir R. COVID 19 and the race to publish: an ethical issue. *Br J Surg* 2020; DOI:10.1002/bjs.11966 [Epub ahead of print]
2. Nolan GS, Dunne JA, Kiely AL, Pritchard Jones RO, Gardiner M, RSTNCOVID: Skin Collaborative *et al.* The effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on skin cancer surgery in the United Kingdom: a national, multi-centre, prospective cohort study and survey of Plastic Surgeons. *Br J Surg* 2020; DOI: 10.1002/bjs.12047 [Epub ahead of print]